

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

**PRESCRIBED BURNING**

(Acre)

**CODE 338**

**DEFINITION**

Applying controlled fire to a predetermined area.

**PURPOSES**

- To control undesirable vegetation.
- To prepare sites for harvesting, planting or seeding.
- To control plant disease.
- To reduce wildfire hazards.
- To improve wildlife habitat.
- To improve plant production quantity and/or quality.
- To remove slash and debris.
- To enhance seed and seedling production.
- To facilitate distribution of grazing and browsing animals.
- To restore and maintain ecological sites.

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

On rangeland, forestland, native pasture, pastureland, wildlife land, hayland, and other lands as appropriate.

**CRITERIA**

**General Criteria Applicable To All Purposes**

The procedure, equipment, and the number of trained personnel shall be adequate to accomplish the intended purposes as stated in the burn plan.

The expected weather conditions, human and vehicular traffic that may be impeded by heat or smoke, liability (e.g., utility lines) and safety and

health precautions shall be integrated into the timing, location and expected intensity of the burn.

Timing of burning will be commensurate with soil and site conditions to maintain site productivity and minimize effects on soil erosion and soil properties (structure, soil moisture).

Comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations during the implementation of this practice.

**CONSIDERATIONS**

Burning should be managed with consideration for wildlife needs such as nesting, feeding, and cover.

Existing barriers such as lakes, streams, wetlands, roads, and constructed firebreaks are important to the design and layout of this practice.

Notify adjoining landowners, local fire departments and public safety officials within the airshed prior to burning.

Consider cultural resources and threatened and endangered plants and animals when planning this practice.

Weather parameters and other data that affect fire behavior should be monitored during the burn. Carbon release should be minimized by the timing and burn intensity.

Consider the location of utilities such as electric power lines and natural gas pipelines to prevent damage to the utility and avoid personal injury.

Smoke impacts should be considered before the burn and monitored during the burn.

**PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS**

A written burn plan will be prepared by certified individuals. Specifications for applying this practice shall be prepared for each site and recorded using

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

approved specification sheets, job sheets, technical notes, and narrative statements in the conservation plan, or other acceptable documentation. All necessary permits must be obtained before implementation of the practice. [The local fire warden and/or fire department must be notified immediately before all burns.](#)

As a minimum, a burning plan will include:

- Description of the burn area including present vegetation cover.
- Objective and timing of burn.
- Acceptable conditions for prescribed burn.
- Preparation of the area for burning.
- Equipment/personnel needs/safety requirements.
- Special precaution areas.
- Firing technique.

## **OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

The kinds and expected variability of site factors (e.g., fuel condition and moisture content, weather conditions, human and vehicular traffic that may be impeded by heat or smoke, liability, and safety and health precautions) shall be monitored during the operation of this practice. Sufficient fire suppression equipment and personnel shall be available commensurate with the expected behavior of these factors during the time of burning to prevent a wildfire or other safety, health or liability incident.

Maintenance shall include monitoring of the burned site and adjacent areas until such time as ash, debris and other consumed material is at pre-burn temperatures.

## **REFERENCES**

Thompson, Elizabeth H. and Eric R. Sorenson. 2000. [Wetland, Woodland, Wildland – A Guide to the Natural Communities of Vermont](#). VTFWD & TNC of VT. 456pp.